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ABSTRACT

The College Assessment and Planning Process (CAPP) at New Mexico State University-Grants(NMSU-G) combines in a 2-year cycle the processes of assessment of student academic achievement, review of program effectiveness, strategic planning, and institutional development. Virtually all faculty and staff are involved in the process, which features individually designed assessment strategies, and program and institutional development throughout the 2-year cycle. Assessment activities are conducted on an ongoing basis. These activities include classroom assessment and classroom research; as well as assessments of instructional programs, instructional support, adult basic education, student services, outreach services, and institutional support. In addition to assessment activities, focus groups provide the means of developing integrated statements of strengths, concerns, and action plans. Focus group activities occur primarily in the second (i.e., fall) semester of the four-semester CAPP sequence, with groups identifying strengths and concerns related to instruction, student services, outreach programs, and institutional support. During alternate spring semesters, the campus director brings together key players from all college functions to conduct focus group institutional planning activities. All college employees and representatives from the community are invited to participate in a retreat where college-level strengths and concerns are identified and an action plan is developed. Implementation of the action plans may require the following 2 years of the sequence. After the institutional action plan has been fully implemented, the Alpha Group conducts a review of the operation of the complete cycle of the CAPP projects. The role of institutional research in the CAPP process is two-fold: completing institution-wide research projects (e.g., student, employee, and community surveys) and coaching and advising employees in various departments as they develop individual assessment projects. (KP)

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ED 379 034

NEW MEXICO STATE UNIVERSITY AT GRANTS

COLLEGE ASSESSMENT AND PLANNING PROCESS

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January 1995

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NMSU - GRANTS
COLLEGE ASSESSMENT AND PLANNING PROCESS

INTRODUCTION

New Mexico State University at Grants has embarked on a process of development and implementation of a College Assessment and Planning Process (CAPP). The process, designed around a two-year cycle, will involve all regular employees, enable cyclic review of major institutional functions, assess student academic achievement, and focus on positive institutional change. The process features flexibility in assessment styles and relates assessment processes and products directly to Institutional Mission and Purposes. In addition to assessment activities, focus groups will provide the means of developing integrated statements of strengths, concerns, and action plans. The focus of the CAPP project is to develop and implement strategies designed to improve the delivery of educational services to the citizens of the service area. NMSU-Grants owes a debt of gratitude to Dr. Fred Lillibridge, Dr. David Leas, and Marjorie Vallejos for their early work in this field, from which many of the present concepts are drawn. Roman Numerals and Alpha references in the document are related to Figure 1, College Assessment and Planning Process.

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HISTORY OF THE PROJECT

On the Grants Campus of New Mexico State University planning for implementation of an outcomes assessment program began in the spring of 1988 with the formation of a steering committee. After an eighteen-month period of research and development, that group agreed to focus on three components of the institution's mission statement: the transfer mission, the career preparation mission, and the developmental education/basic skills mission. It was the project's purpose that, within each of those three categories, each certificate- and degree-seeking student be guided toward the setting of appropriate goals, and the cooperative monitoring of how well those goals were being met.

Three subcommittees were formed, one for each of the three components of the mission statement that was to be assessed.

(1) The Transfer Mission Subcommittee began its task by identifying those students who intended to transfer to another campus of NMSU or to another institution after attendance on our campus. Secondly, a procedure for helping students set goals and meet them was designed. To that end, a *Transfer Advisor's Check Sheet* was created, and faculty advisors trained how to use it. Thirdly, a plan was set up to follow these students after transfer, and to obtain feedback from them.

The initial results were constructive: not only were transfer students assigned advisors, but all students in the process were assigned to one of the full-time faculty for advisement within their programs. Moreover, the subcommittee's efforts have been focused on increasing retention rates, as well as facilitating the transfer of certain of our students.

(2) The Developmental Education Subcommittee set itself the task of writing a program that would provide a statistical analysis of the performance of students enrolled in the developmental studies program. Their grades and rate of completion have been compared to

those students, who, through the results of a placement test, were placed in college-level courses without remedial coursework. Secondly, the committee compared the performance of those students in the individually-paced developmental math courses to those in the traditional lecture sections.

The conclusions are qualified, given that the samples have been small, and the number of semesters tracked few. However, it appears that students enrolled in our developmental studies courses perform as well subsequently as those not requiring remedial coursework. Further, those whose developmental mathematics classes were individually-paced seem to out perform those in the traditional lecture sections.

(3) The Career Preparation Subcommittee decided that competency testing would be beneficial for the students enrolled in occupational programs, and for the purpose of the institution's outcomes assessment. To that end, the subcommittee has devised goal sheets and target competencies for each of the programs. The tests are administered during the student's final semester.

These early assessment activities provided a foundation for the current project. These assessment activities have been incorporated into the College Assessment and Planning Process developed and adopted during the 1994-95 academic year. The CAPP project, described below, adopts a broader range of assessment activities than the original project, and coordinates assessment, planning, and institutional improvement activities.

FACULTY AND STAFF PARTICIPATION

The plan is shown in diagram form in Figure 1. As may be seen, the planning process leads directly to positive institutional change by developing action plans and focusing human, fiscal, and program resources on the planned changes. Although assessment activities will be conducted on a continuing basis, the two-year cycle of the planning process will allow time for the development and implementation of strategies to accomplish action plans. Virtually all regular faculty and staff are involved in the project.

Faculty

Regular faculty are involved in the process of assessment and institutional planning in several ways. Part-time faculty are invited to participate; many do so.

1. Faculty are involved in the assessment of student academic achievement as the students progress through various instructional program. (B)
2. Individual faculty members conduct classroom assessment activities intended to lead to the improvement of their instructional processes. (A)
3. Some faculty are engaged in classroom research designed to lead to improvement of instruction and programs. (A)
4. All regular faculty participate in the instructional focus group to define instructional strengths and concerns, and to develop an instructional action plan intended to lead to the improvement of programs and processes. (H)
5. All faculty who wish may participate in the institutional focus group to ascertain institutional strengths and concerns, and to develop an institutional action plan. (III)
6. One or more faculty members participate in each focus group throughout the process.

Staff

All regular staff are active in assessment and planning processes in a number of ways.

1. Staff members participate in various assessment projects related to their areas of employment.
2. Staff members participate in focus groups related to their areas of responsibility. These focus groups develop lists of strengths and concerns and formulate an action plan for their specific areas of responsibility. Faculty will be included in all assessment focus group activities.
3. Staff members are invited to participate in the institutional focus group to define institutional strengths and concerns, and to develop an institutional action plan. (III)

THE CAPP PROJECT

The NMSU-Grants College Assessment and Planning Process (CAPP) combines in a two-year cycle the processes of assessment of student academic achievement, review of program effectiveness, strategic planning, and institutional development. Virtually all faculty and staff are involved in the process, which features individually designed assessment strategies and program and institutional development throughout the two-year cycle.

I. ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES
(Spring 1995, Spring 1997)

Assessment activities are in fact conducted on an ongoing basis. Some assessment projects occur every semester. With the intent of organizing an orderly flow of assessment and institutional planning, however, reporting of assessments activities is focused on alternate Spring semesters (Spring 1995, Spring 1997, etc.). Training and resources have been provided to faculty and staff. Each director, mentor, or faculty member designs and implements an individualized assessment strategy for his or her class or program. The results of assessment projects are used first to provide the basis for immediate program or instructional improvement, and second to provide objective input into the focus group sequence to be implemented the following semester.

A. Classroom Assessment/Classroom Research

Classroom assessment and classroom research activities are conducted by faculty on an ongoing basis. The focus of these activities is immediate improvement of classroom instruction. The individual faculty member completes a classroom assessment or research project and uses the results to affect immediate or ongoing corrections to instructional processes in his or her

course. Initial training and an initial round of classroom assessment activities were completed by faculty during CY 1994.

B. Instructional Program Assessment

Faculty complete assessment projects to review the effectiveness or degree of student academic achievement within various instructional programs. Individual faculty members design assessment strategies to specifically address their individual students and programs. After completion of a project, the faculty member reports on the outcomes of the assessment project using the Outcomes Assessment Report Form (Attachment 1). Program improvement is achieved as a result of these projects in two ways:

1. A program mentor or faculty member may affect immediate changes to a program where appropriate.

2. Results of program reviews are carried forward to focus groups (II) and used to develop more comprehensive instructional strengths, concerns, and action plans.

C. Instructional Support

Instructional Support activities include the library and the tutoring center. Each of these activities conducts assessment activities to ascertain the degree of effectiveness and acceptance of their programs. The results of these projects are used to bring about immediate corrections and to provide input to the focus group project (II).

D. Adult Basic Education

Classroom assessment is conducted by ABE personnel on an ongoing basis to the end of improving the quality and focus of ABE instructional processes. ABE program assessment activities focus on obtaining feedback concerning the effectiveness of the ABE program. Initial program assessment projects will be completed by the end of the Spring 1995 semester. Results of the classroom assessment and program assessment activities are brought to the Institutional Support focus group meetings (K) for use in developing instructional strengths, concerns, and

action plans. The results of these assessment projects may be used immediately by the director of ABE to make improvements to the program.

E. Student Services

Student Services functions include admissions, financial aid, advisement, registration, student activities, career services, JTPA, and special populations processes. Certain Student Services assessment projects have been ongoing. For purposes of this plan, however, Students Services focuses on compiling the results of an array of assessment projects by the end of the Spring 1995 and Spring 1997 semesters. Results of these assessment projects may be employed to introduce immediate corrections to Student Services processes. These results are also brought forward to the focus group sequence of the plan (II).

F. Outreach Services

Outreach services include a variety of instructional and public service activities which generally fall outside the scope of the college's on-campus for-credit instructional programs. Outreach services include off-campus academic programs, Elderhostel, non-credit continuing education courses, contract training, recruiting, marketing/public relations, and a preschool nursery program. Assessment of the effectiveness of these programs is completed during the Spring 1995 and Spring 1997 semesters. The results are used to affect immediate improvements and to provide input for the focus group sequence (II).

G. Institutional Support

At NMSU-Grants, institutional support functions include facilities and the business office. Initial assessment of these activities will be completed during the Spring 1995 semester. Results of these assessment activities will be brought to the focus group process (VII) for the development of strengths, concerns, and an action plan for institutional support activities. These

results may also be used to bring about immediate improvements to the operation of facilities and the business office.

II. FOCUS GROUP ACTIVITIES
(Fall 1995, 1997)

Focus group activities occur primarily during the second semester of the four semester sequence of the CAPP project (Fall 1995, Fall 1997). Groups are formed to address the four major institutional areas: Instruction, Student Services, Outreach Programs, and Institutional Support. The focus groups are comprised of key players from each of the specified areas, along with one or more faculty members, and one or more non-employees to represent the college's community constituency.

H. Instruction

The bi-annual focus group for Instruction is chaired by the Associate Campus Director for Instruction. The meeting brings together key representatives from all the instructional areas: faculty, Adult Basic Education, and Instructional Support. At least one non-employee representative from the community is included. The task of the group is to develop lists of approximately five strengths and five concerns related to Instruction. For each concern the team develops an action plan including one or more objectives, related strategies, and appropriate time lines.

I. Student Services

The bi-annual Student Services focus group is chaired by the Assistant Campus Director for Student Services, and brings together all Student Services employees along with faculty representation and at least one representative of the community to speak for constituency concerns. The task of the Student Services focus group is to develop lists of approximately five

program strengths and five program concerns. For each concern an action plan is devised, including appropriate objectives, related strategies, and time lines.

J. Outreach Programs

The bi-annual focus group for Outreach programs is chaired by the Coordinator of Community Education and brings together representatives from all the outreach programs. Representation from faculty and from at least one community person is included. The task of the Outreach Programs focus group is to develop lists of approximately five strengths and five concerns related to Outreach programs. For each concern the team develops an action plan including one or more objectives along with related strategies and appropriate time lines.

K. Institutional Support

The focus group for Instructional Support is chaired by the Fiscal Specialist, and includes representatives from the Business Office, Facilities, and Institutional Research, as well as at least one community person to champion the interests of the college's community constituency, and one or more faculty members. The task of this focus group is to define lists of approximately five strengths, five concerns, and an action plan including objectives related to each of the concerns, along with related objectives, strategies, and time lines.

III. INSTITUTIONAL PLANNING ACTIVITIES
(Spring 1996-1998, etc.)

During alternate spring semesters (1996, 1998, etc.) the Campus Director brings together key players from all College functions (Instruction, Student Services, Outreach Services, and Institutional Support) to conduct focus group institutional planning activities. All college employees are invited to participate in the retreat, along with representatives from the local community. The retreat is sponsored and chaired by the Campus Director. The retreat focuses on the development of a list of approximately 10 college-level strengths and ten concerns. For

each concern, the group develops an action plan including one or more objectives, related strategies, and time-lines. (III)

As part of this process, this focus group reviews the college's accomplishment of Institutional Mission and Purposes. Each of the Strengths, Concerns, and Action Plan Statements is a related to one or more Institutional Purposes. A brief statement relating to the accomplishment of each Institutional Purpose is prepared by the group, along with any additional recommendations for improvement of performance related to Institutional Mission and Purposes.

After the focus group recommends its action plans, it is the responsibility of the Campus Director and the campus administrative team (Alpha Group) to allocate resources for the accomplishment of related objectives. Some fiscal resources may be used from the current budget; however, major fiscal commitments must be planned into the forthcoming budget. Personnel may be assigned responsibility for overseeing accomplishment of the various institutional objectives. In some cases it may be necessary to alter an existing program or initiate a new program devoted to accomplishment of one or more objectives.

IV. IMPLEMENTATION OF ACTION PLAN
(Fall 1996, 1998, etc.)

Although some aspects of the Institutional Action Plan may be implemented earlier, full implementation of the plan will be completed by the fall semester following institutional focus group activities (Fall 1996, 1998, etc.). Some objectives may be achieved rather quickly. Others, however may require the following two years of the sequence - or even longer - for completion. The Campus Director is responsible for overseeing the ongoing implementation of the CAPP action plan.

After the Institutional Action Plan has been fully implemented, the Alpha Group conducts a review of the operation of the complete cycle of the CAPP projects. The team is looking for

ways to improve the CAPP cycle. Recommendations by the Alpha Group for improvement of the process may be incorporated into upcoming CAPP cycle.

V. INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH

The role of institutional research in the CAPP process is twofold: completion of institutional research processes, and coaching and advising employees in the various departments as they develop individual assessment projects. The institutional research process is continuous (Fig. 1), and provides input and assistance at any point in the two-year unfolding of the CAPP project. Institutional research projects completed by Institutional Research at various points include: 1) Student Surveys, 2) Employee Surveys, and 3) Community Surveys.

Information from each of these projects is available at any point during the two-year CAPP program.

NCA SELF-STUDY ASSESSMENT AREAS

Student Population (Ron)

Instructional Programs (Nadine, Cecelia)
- Student Academic Achievement

Instructional Support (Nadine)
- Library
- Tutoring

Faculty (Nadine, Sharon M., Mike T.)

Business Office Functions (Ida)
- Budget
- Purchasing
- Personnel
- Bookstore

Student Services (Mr. Danek)
- Advising
- Financial Aid
- Admission
- Registration
- Student Activities
- Career Services
- JTPA
- Retention
- Services for Special Populations

Administration and Governance (Dr. Leas)

Outreach Services (Mike T.)
- Non-Credit Classes
- Off Campus Classes
- Contract Training
- Elderhostel
- Recruiting
- Marketing/Public Relations
- SBDC

ABE (Nadine, Barbara)

Physical Plant (Dr. Leas, Eulogio)
- Maintenance
- Custodial Services
- Vehicles
- Buildings

Institutional Research (Ron, Mike T., Dr. Leas)

FOCUS GROUP REPORT

Chair: _____ Date of Meeting _____

Attendees: _____

Strengths

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Concerns

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

ACTION PLAN

Concern 1.
Objective

Strategy

Completion Date

Concern 2.
Objective

Strategy

Completion Date

Concern 3.
Objective

Strategy

Completion Date

Concern 4.
Objective

Strategy

Completion Date

Concern 5.
Objective

Strategy

Completion Date

INSTITUTIONAL FOCUS GROUP REPORT

Strengths

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.

INSTITUTIONAL FOCUS GROUP REPORT

Concerns

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.

INSTITUTIONAL FOCUS GROUP
ACTION PLAN

Concern 1.
Objective

Strategy

Completion Date

Concern 2.
Objective

Strategy

Completion Date

Concern 3.
Objective

Strategy

Completion Date

Concern 4.
Objective

Strategy

Completion Date

Concern 5.
Objective

Strategy

Completion Date

Concern 6.
Objective

Strategy

Completion Date

Concern 7.
Objective

Strategy

Completion Date

Concern 8.
Objective

Strategy

Completion Date

Concern 9.
Objective

Strategy

Completion Date

Concern 10.
Objective

Strategy

Completion Date

NMSU-GRANTS

Outcomes Assessment Report

Name _____ Date _____

Class/Area/Activity Being Assessed _____

Date(s) of Assessment Activity _____

Brief Description of Assessment Activity

Results of Assessment Project

Action planned in response to results of Assessment Project

Fig. 1

College Assessment and Planning Process